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THE BANNER

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BY WM. J. BURNS.

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DUTY—A TALE.

BY MRS. DINNIES, OF MO.

(CONCLUDED.)

Edward had rushed from his home in a state bordering upon madness, and long he wandered through the streets, scarce conscious whether he went, until in a distant part of the city he encountered Mr. Selmer, who was seeking him; silently he took his arm and turned toward his home; but when they reached the door, Edward stopped, and looked up in the face of his friend—"She is gone my son! She has acted nobly, quick to perceive her duty, she will be sustained in its performance." "I commit her to your care, and direct me in the difficulties by which I am surrounded." They entered, and after several hours spent in the perusal of Isabella's journal, the most proper conduct to be pursued under the circumstances appeared to be that Mr. Selmer should hasten to New Orleans and carefully state to Isabella the events that had transpired since her departure.

And while he is on his way, let us take a rapid survey of the events that had occurred to Isabella after embarking on board the Empress. The first two or three days of their voyage were prosperous. The narration of the negro was correct, so far as it went, for when chased by the pirates, Mrs. Delancy had sought death for herself and child amid the waters. After the massacre of the crew and passengers of the Empress had been completed, they were rescued from some floating article which had been flung overboard to lighten the vessel, and to which she had probably clung after reason had ceased to guide, and instinct alone controlled her actions. Certain it is that both she and her child were insensible when discovered by the pirates, and would have been left to perish, had not one of the crew, more humane than the rest, persisted in saving the harmless woman and her little child. When Isabella was resuscitated, she found herself in a strange vessel, among rough looking men, and was not long in arriving at the conclusion that she was a captive. Eva was sleeping softly by her side, and she determined to the still and watch events; presently a young man with strongly marked features, and a commanding air, entered the cabin. Isabella started when she saw him—he spoke, and she was sure the voice was familiar to her ear—she watched him attentively. One of the officers addressed him by the name of Harris, and he flashed upon her memory that in the pirate before her, she beheld a wayward and long lost son of her old Irish nurse or foster mother. Isaac Harris had ever been a wrong headed boy, but she knew that like most of the Irish peasantry, he had strong affections. She began to hope much from the memories she might awaken in his mind, and she resolved to wait an opportunity to make herself known to him—the opportunity occurred, was embraced, and proved successful.

Having received a promise of protection from one of the officers, Isabella heard with more calmness than she had possible, that she was to accompany the pirates to Barataria. She also heard that they had another captive in their stronghold, and she was not without hopes that Harris would aid her in escaping from his dreadful associates. It was soon understood that the fair captive and her child were under the care of Harris, the second officer in command, and of course as the principle of honor among thieves was in full force among them, Isabella was treated with every mark of respect. When they reached Barataria, Harris informed Mrs. Delancy that it might become necessary for her future security that she should take her to his own house and live in a degree of seeming intimacy with her before his comrades. But the high-minded woman instantly rejected the proposal.

"Never!" she exclaimed, "shall I suffer a shadow to rest upon the name of Delancy—even amid pirates my husband's honor shall be preserved unsullied, and my fair name above reproach."

"Lady, it might save you from insult could you consent to appear better satisfied with one whose respect alone makes him presume to approach you with such proposals, replied the pirate—but it was useless."

"You have spoken before me of an aged captive, whose illness confines him to his bed, and whose high rank induces your associates to preserve his life in the hope of a ransom—place me with him—gladly will I undertake the charge of nursing him. And you, Isaac Harris, remember what my parents have done for yours, and I do not fear to trust that your gratitude and fidelity will save me from further wrong."

And so it was arranged. Isabella and her child were permitted to inhabit the rude abode that had been devoted to an old gentleman who had languished for many months among the pirates, pining for that home which he had left only to re-establish his health by sea air, and sailing about among the islands of the West Indies, where he had large possessions. Captured by the pirates, he was recognized by one of the crew as one of the most wealthy commoners in France—an old gentleman of Lyons, noted for his opulence, his magnificence, and his boundless liberality to the poor—a man who had known many sorrows in his youth, but who was now alone in the world, without a relative to claim his immense possessions when he should be no more, and it was the policy of the pirates to save and treat with kindness one whom they hoped to exact some reward for such unwanted mercy. But the prin-

ciples of the venerable old man were too well established for him to listen to any terms from a set of lawless desperadoes—men outlawed by their country and their God—the committers of that crime most abhorrent to humanity—Piracy. And though he withered in sickness and sorrow for his home and its enjoyments, he was firm in his rejection of liberty at such a price.

The consolation of a nurse so gentle, and a companion so delightful, was indeed great to Mr. Lorraine; and to Isabella the arrangement offered every advantage of which her situation was susceptible. Residing upon him all those attentions which she could have offered to her father, and very soon the affection of parent and child grew up between them in all its fervency. Jointly they engaged in educating the little Eva, and Isabella soon learned that for the sake of her departure she should ever bless her acquaintance with so educated, so polished, and so kind a friend.

Weeks—months—passed over—at last years elapsed—and there was little to mark their flight but the improvements of mind in Eva, and the increased affection of her two instructors. Isabella had labored too in the difficult task of reclaiming Isaac Harris from his life of crime and peril, and she began to hope that she was making an impression on his wild and ardent feelings. At last, when nearly three years of captivity were passed by Mrs. Delancy, the pirates began to entertain fears of the discovery of their hitherto secret retreat.

Suspicious of treachery were awakened in the mind of Lafitte. Isaac Harris was watched in a manner that aroused all the indignation of his character—and he who had been deaf to the entreaties of a being he regarded as almost above mortality—the suggestions of his own heart, and the reviving sense of justice, now yielded to the passionate impulse of revenge. Suspected at first without a cause, he soon resented the indignation of distrust by preparing to liberate the captives, and place himself under the protection of the laws, by becoming evidence against his former associates.

Alas! that no nobler motive than revenge prompted this decision. But gratefully he was hailed by Isabella and her friend, whose declining health rendered a change of air and climate most desirable. He promised all the influence he could exert in behalf of Harris, if he would take them safely to Lyons, and as secrecy was imperative, of course, Isabella gladly availed herself of the opportunity to escape to France. It was impossible to convey even the slightest intimation of her safety to her husband without compromising Harris's plan, and of course nothing could induce her to run such a risk.

At length the hour of escape arrived—silently, and at midnight, they left Barataria, in an open boat—gained a secluded spot on the nearest island, where Harris had managed to anchor a small fishing smack—and placing his anxious passengers on board, he began fearlessly but cautiously to steer toward the Island of Cuba—there he landed at night—disguised himself and his party most effectually; and early the next day they sailed for France, as father, daughter, and grandchild, with one servant, and safely reached Lyons.

Here the increasing illness of Mr. Lorraine rendered his appeal to government in behalf of Harris impossible, and the first feelings of anger having subsided in the bosom of that quick tempered person, he felt a reluctance to be the one to deliver up his former comrades to justice, and only begged to be permitted to return to Ireland, and live as it was, to settle in some honorable calling. Mr. Lorraine, after liberally rewarding his fidelity, allowed him to depart, pledging for him six months, that he might have every chance of reaching home unmolested by the pirates, and of commencing a life of reform and industry.

Ere the six months which were to elapse before Mrs. Delancy made known her existence to her friends, or attempted to cross the Atlantic, had passed, the spirit of her aged friend and tenderly loved companion in captivity, had winged its flight to a better world; and at the opening of his will, she was discovered to be his sole heir. He had heard from her so much of the virtues and excellencies of her husband, and beheld in Isabella such a devoted love and admiration of him, and he had heard her speak so often of his honest exertions to overcome the difficulties of his business affairs, that the old gentleman rightly conjectured that the greatest happiness he could bestow upon the being who had so unweariedly devoted her care and attention to himself, would be the proud privilege he afforded her of bestowing unbounded wealth upon her idolized husband.

Ah! who can describe the emotions that swelled the heart of Isabella, as she opened the will of her friend, and found that she found herself on board a fast sailing vessel bound for New Orleans? Mistress of more wealth than her humble wishes had ever aspired to—with her daughter beaming in all the beauty of her age, and beyond her years intelligent and accomplished—her own person and countenance sparkling under the influence of health and happiness—scarcely at the age of twenty-five, with every grace of manner and charm of mind encircling around her, and the one deep, pure passionate desire of bestowing them upon the idol of her imagination, the husband of her love, burning in her heart, like a lamp upon some holy shrine—proudly she felt

all this—and gratefully she looked to the Giver of such blessings, to sustain her under the trials of prosperity, as he had saved her amidst the dangers and disappointments of adversity.

Thus it was that she had arrived in America, and under these feelings and circumstances had her letter and journal been despatched from New Orleans to Delancy. We have seen the circumstances under which they found him, and noticed the result. Mr. Selmer arrived and waited on Isabella. The magnificence by which she was surrounded at first surprised him, for like most women Mrs. Delancy had a taste for splendor, and as the means to gratify it were amply in her power, she took a pride in preparing everything for the reception of her husband in the highest style of refinement and luxury. She scarcely welcomed Mr. Selmer in her eagerness to meet Mr. Delancy, who she supposed would be with his guardian, and a shade passed over her radiant countenance upon perceiving he was not present. We will draw a veil over the scene that followed. Imagination may depict, but surely no pen could portray, the emotions which arose in the bosom of a wife like Isabella, under the events which it was the painful duty of Mr. Selmer to reveal!

Wounded affection—mortified self-love—and insulted confidence—betrayed trust—and crushed hopes wrung her heart, and the dreams of happiness which had never wandered from their center, but played in all their varied contractions around the sun from which they derived their light and warmth which gave them being—must now vanish forever. After the years of cherished fondness—the hours of fearful, prayerful agony, in which she had thought of him—the months of ardent expectation, and the days of suspense she had endured, was this the result? To find herself forgotten—her image supplanted—her very name given to another—and that by him! him to whom she had devoted her whole soul—her high faculties, and deep affections.

For weeks Isabella lay upon the bed of sickness—a brain fever prostrating her whole system, rendered life itself long doubtful. Mr. Selmer watched beside her, and his feeling heart mourned over the desolation of spirit betrayed by the sufferer amid the ravings of the delirium. But a good constitution and able medical skill, enabled her to surmount the disease. The first feeble words of recovered consciousness were addressed to Mr. Selmer, in a request that her child should not be taken from her.

Mr. Selmer was shocked—he saw that her strong mind was beginning to realize her situation, and already to arrange plans for the future. He tried to evade the question, but she clung to it with the pertinacity of an invalid. "Promise me that I shall keep my child," she persisted, with greater energy—and he promised that the law should not be enforced if she determined not to return to her husband. "Never! never!" and the energetic words which she pronounced these words, while it exhausted her little remaining strength, convinced Mr. Selmer that the determination was final.

In a few days she began steadily but decidedly to improve, and it seems that her plans were all clear before her, for she requested Mr. Selmer would spend the morning with her, as she wished for the last time to speak upon a subject that must never again be referred to. A copy of the Bible was on the stand before her, as though the calmness of her manner, and firmness of her tone, had been derived from a frequent study of its holy pages, and familiarity with its truths, which alone can strengthen in the hour of weakness, and console in the moment of affliction. She stated that upon mature reflection she had resolved to return immediately to Natchez—that her child having been born there, her history would be known to all, and none could misjudge her. She requested her friend would procure for her a commodious mansion, and told him she had already while in France, purchased furniture, &c., on a scale of magnificence seldom equalled, and which she begged he would see arranged. Mr. Selmer here interrupted her.

"If you will not live with your husband, Isabella, why not get a divorce or retire into a convent?"

Her eye flashed one of its proudest beams upon the old man, as she answered haughtily:

"Divorce! Mr. Selmer! how dare you ask of me so idle a ceremony? Can man by his laws, or his conventional usages, set at naught a sacrament of God's holy church? Is not the command binding as it is positive, 'Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder'?" She paused, and Mr. Selmer answered firmly:

"The church for weighty reasons sometimes permits a separation between husband and wife, but never allows either party to marry while the other is alive. In this she follows the command of Christ enforced by the apostle St. Paul."

Isabella immediately opened the Bible at the 7th chapter to the Corinthians—is Epistle, 10th verse—and read, "But to them that are married, I, I, and the Lord commandeth that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." Outraged as my feelings have been this alternative cannot be expected from me. And I have no vocation for a convent, even if it was possible for one in my position to gain admittance; but you must be aware that to take the vows in a religious order, the consent of both parties is required, and the husband also must enter the church. However, sir, as I said, I have no voca-

tion for the duties of such a life, and would neither insult my Maker by offering him a victim of disappointment and misery, nor the pure and heavenly minded community among whom you would advise me to wear out the residue of my days, by carrying my wretchedness among them. No, dear Mr. Selmer, my duties are of a different class, and paramount to the duty to my daughter; for her, and to her I must endeavor to render the poor boon of existence a blessing; for this my very energy will be exerted. I also owe a high duty to myself, my walk through life must continue as it ever has been—blameless. And surely society has its claims upon my wealth as upon my time. No, sir, my views of life may differ from those of many persons, but I see high and holy duties binding me to the world, and there, amid its turmoils, its splendor and its follies, will I endeavor to shape my future course, bearing with me 'a conscience void of offence to God and man,' and trying to forget or conceal the sorrows of my heart!"

Again she paused, and Mr. Selmer gazed with admiration he could not conceal upon one so young, so noble, so firmly resolved boldly to meet the difficulties of her situation, and with a pure and holy self-confidence calmly to conquer them. Her eyes were raised to Heaven, with an expression of faith and high resolve, more touching to him than all the brilliancy which was so common with them. After a while she added—

"You will give me the protection of residing with me, my dear sir. I am sure you will!" and she looked beseechingly upon him.

"I will—I will!" he replied, as overcame with conflicting emotions, he left the room.

We will pass over a couple of months' and resume when these plans had been carried into execution, and Mrs. Delancy was established in a superb residence in Natchez. The romance of her situation, added to her known riches and high bearing, soon brought around her all that was estimable in fashion, while her liberal patronage of the arts—her fine appreciation of talent—her admiration of genius, and taste in literature, rendered her house the resort of everything elegant, refined or valuable. Her cultivated mind, and manners, sumptuous entertainments, and well-known benevolence, made her deservedly popular among all ranks in the community. No duty was neglected; devoting all her love and much of her time to her daughter, she moved steadily upon her path "a bright particular star," and the admiration of all, wearing the mild aspect of resignation, if not contentment, ever on her face. None could have suspected that sorrow had ever darkened that brow, or disappointment barbed an arrow for that heart. Mr. Selmer alone saw that a change had fallen upon her, character, and read in the impassioned love she bore her child, the earnest desire to render herself all in all to the lovely Eva.

Delancy and herself had never met even by accident, although Isabella avoided no place of resort where she might have seen him; but he had feared for her and himself, and scarcely moved beyond his own doors, except when business or duty called him abroad. Adele, with all the shrinking delicacy of a sensitive heart, had retired from the world, and became a member of that beautiful illustration of Christian mercy, known as "The Sisters of Charity." Her gentle spirit and humble virtues fitted her in all respects for the vocation she had selected—and many a wretched sufferer had cause to bless the young sister who so kindly tended at his bed of sickness, and instructed him in the consolations of religion.

Years rolled by. Delancy had hoped that time would in some shape alter and improve his condition—but alas! if he expected ever to be recalled by Isabella, he knew little of the heart of woman. Had his offense been any other than it was, love would have palliated and pardoned the transgression. But to find another image where her own had been—to know that the words of love which he had breathed to her, had been poured, perhaps with the same passionate earnestness into the ears of another—the lip, so often in the fullness of confidence pressed upon her brow, had given its fervor to another's cheek—the bosom upon which she had rested every care and found relief, had pillowed another head—No! it was not in the nature of a woman like Isabella to forgive what to her highly wrought feelings appeared almost a sacrilege. She mourned her husband as if he had been dead; but never could be anything to her in this life again. And so he at last discovered: but the strong desire to behold his child, and once more gaze upon the features of his wife, now took possession of his mind. And when he learned that she would, with Eva, attend a concert that was to be given at one of the theatres, he resolved alone to be among the audience.

The evening arrived. Mrs. Delancy's box was one of the most conspicuous in the theatre. The company was large; but quietly seated in the parquette was Delancy: seeing nothing; but keeping his eye steadfastly fixed upon the box his wife was to occupy. Isabella came late; she was leaning upon the arm of Mr. Selmer, and held Eva by the hand; for a moment the group stood in that position until the door of the box was opened, and Delancy had a full view of them. He rose upon his feet, and stood like one entranced gazing upon them. When they were seated, Eva leaped forward, falling in an instant Delancy rushed forward, and catching it to his bosom, left the house. So quickly had the scene passed, that Isabella had not perceived her hus-

band, though, when on their return home Eva described to her the conduct of the strange man who had run away with her handkerchief, her heart told her too truly who it must have been.

"And they might have been mine," exclaimed the wretched man, as he flew into the street. "Oh! how bitterly and I punished for an involuntary error, but I can bear it no more, I must quit Natchez, and find an asylum somewhere for my grief."

And when he returned to his solitary home, his resolve was taken; he determined to give up his occupations and travel. He resolved to visit the Holy Land, and see all those places mentioned in Scripture, and sanctified by the sufferings of a Saviour, and the trials of the Saints; and to devote himself to acts of virtue and piety; and to seek those consolations in religion which could alone enable him to support the sorrows of his situation. Having thus resolved, he felt calmer than he had been for years before.

It was a fine autumnal evening—the shadows of twilight yet lingered over the earth; but within the mansion of Mrs. Delancy a blaze of light poured down from the various and magnificently wrought candle-labra over the rich carpet and gorgeous draperies, and threw a glow of sunlight radiance upon the superb paintings and splendid statuary that decorated the drawing room. Eva was reclining half asleep upon a crimson couch; and on a luxuriant looking ottoman by her side, sat Isabella, arrayed with more than usual care, and glittering with gems of rare devices and costly setting. She was expecting a select party of the most favored of her acquaintances, and bestowed some attention to effect, that their visit might be rendered in every way agreeable. A servant entered, showing in a visitor. Mrs. Delancy rose, and started on beholding a Sister of Charity, but instantly welcomed her with the gentle urbanity which distinguished her manners. Appeals to her benevolence were so common that nothing but the lateness of the hour rendered this visit remarkable—yet as the Sister declined the courtesy of a seat, Isabella was attracted by the sweet tones of the voice which answered her. Her next question of "What can I do for you?" was prompted as much by the idea that there was agitation in the being before her, as by feelings of benevolence.

"My purse," she continued, "is always at the service of the unfortunate; and for other grief,"—finding the Sister still silent—"fear not to speak to me, for suffering has taught me sympathy."

Still the Sister spoke not, and it would have been a fine subject for a painter to have portrayed the two figures as they stood together in that temple of luxury. The tall person of the Sister, shrouded in her loose and shapeless black robe, her head covered by its small black bonnet, shading, not concealing the dazzling whiteness of her brow, her deep blue eyes, and almost childlike features, and the small white hand, whose taper fingers could just be seen beneath the large sleeve that enveloped it—offered a striking contrast to the rich velvet dress whose graceful folds fell around the faultless form of Isabella, as if an artist had arranged it for effect, her hands sparkling with jewels, and her whole appearance bearing evidence of her position and peculiar tastes. Again Mrs. Delancy addressed her visitor, inquiring gently,

"What is your errand with me?"

"Mercy, lady, mercy! I belong to an order in which mercy assumes many forms, but never have I seen her in one more lovely than yours. Oh, listen to her voice, nor let me plead to you in vain;" and she sank upon her knees at the feet of Isabella, still speaking rapidly.

"I am going far from this part of the country—I will never revisit it, but I could not leave until I had looked upon your face and pleaded for one whom I dare not name. Lady there was no sin, for he ceased not to love you, even though we believed that you were dead."

"Adele! it is too late! Delancy has left America. But for you I have no feeling save that of affection. Poor Adele yours has been a bitter lot!"

"No! I am happy in my present state—for happier than I ever was before," she said emphatically, and Isabella pressed her to her heart as if she had been her own young sister.

Their interview was not long protracted. Adele clasped Eva in one fond embrace—and again pressing Isabella to her bosom, she went forth upon her mission of charity to a distant land.

After this night Isabella's feelings assumed a new character. She never spoke of her interview with the Sister of Charity, but her pride of heart seemed to be subduing itself before the power of Religion, to whose requisitions she began to give up more of her time—and when tidings reached her of the death of Adele from a contagious fever, contracted by her attendance at the bedside of a hospital patient, she felt how far more faultless and happy had been the unpretending life of the gentle Sister, than her own proud and more dazzling career.

Eva had now grown almost into womanhood, and Mr. Selmer full of years, was gradually sinking into that last resting-place of the good—a peaceful grave. Isabella had reached her thirty-second year, and the proud spirit of her youth was tranquilized, for the passionate energy of her character had been controlled by suffering and a true religious faith. Still lovely, she had lost much of the brilliancy of her young years—but there was a chastened sweetness in her smile that told of hopes beyond the grave.

One day, while at church, her observation was attracted by an elderly looking

man, whose devout attention to the services elicited her respect—but as her mind soon fixed itself upon her own duty, and the prayers commenced, she thought of him no more, until evening, when told that a stranger desired to see her, when she recognized in the person who entered her sitting room, the subject of her morning's speculation. He was apparently about forty years of age, sunburnt and care worn—and came he said, from a distant land, to deliver into the hands of Mrs. Delancy a chain and locket, which she had once bestowed upon a friend of his. Isabella trembled with emotion at the sound of his deep-toned voice—but when he took from his bosom the well remembered handkerchief which Eva had dropped at the theatre, and clasped the locket from her neck, which she had given to her husband so many years before, her heart told her it was Delancy himself—and unable longer to contain her emotions, she flung herself into his arms, exclaiming,

"My husband! My own dear husband! will you not receive me again to your affection?"

Popping the Question.

Jedediah Hodge was dead in love with beautiful Sally Hammond, but owing to an unconquerable feeling of diffidence, he had never been able to screw up his courage to the point absolutely requisite to enable him to inform her of his predilections. Three several times he had dressed up in his Sunday-go-to-meeting finery, and made his way to her father's house, determined to do or die. But unluckily his courage cooled away, and became "small by degrees, and beautifully less, as the politicians say, till, when he was fairly in her presence, he was barely able to remark that it was a warm evening."

Sally got tired at length of this old nattering observation, and resolved to help him out of his predicament, for, like a true woman, she had not failed to perceive what Jedediah was trying to get at, but couldn't. For the fourth time Jedediah came, but did not succeed any better. Sally commenced her attack by informing him that Mary Summers, an intimate friend, was going to be married. "You don't say so," said Jedediah, then being the only idea that occurred to him, except one, and that he didn't dare to give utterance to.

"Yes," said Sally, "he's going to be married next week. It seems rather queer that she should be married before me, considering she's a year younger."

Jedediah's heart leaped up in his throat but he didn't venture to say anything—there was a pause.